

Message Text

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72

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /096 W

----- 105621

R 122134Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1732

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJ: ANOTHER DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION FRONT SPOKESMAN ARRESTED

REF: QUITO 3438

1. THE DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION FRONT'S "DIRECTOR DE TURNO", CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST FRANCISCO SANCHEZ ORELLANA, WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY JULY 9 ON ORDERS OF MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT POVEDA. FAMILY MEMBERS WHO BELATEDLY REPORTED THIS TO THE LOCAL PRESS INDICATE THAT HE IS BEING HELD IN QUITO'S GARCIA MORENO PRISON.

2. SANCHEZ'S TROUBLES UNDOUBTEDLY ARISE OUT OF HIS JULY 7 RELEASE, IN THE FRENTE'S NAME, OF A PUBLIC STATEMENT TAKING ISSUE WITH REMARKS BY POVEDA MADE THREE DAYS PREVIOUSLY AT A POLICE ACADEMY GRADUATION. POVEDA'S SPEECH, AS REPORTED BY THE PRESS, WAS SOMETHING OF APOTBOILER, DEFENDING THE GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REGIME IN FAMILIAR AND EXAGGERATED TERMS TO AN IN-HOUSE AUDIENCE. AT ONE POINT, HOWEVER, POVEDA TOOK DEAD AIM AT "CERTAIN" OF THE COUNTRY'S SURVIVING CIVILIAN POLITICANS, CALLING THEM SUBVERSIVE CONSPIRATORS AND SELF-SEEKING PURVEYORS OF DEMAGOGY CULLED FROM AN "IDEOLOGICAL CEMETERY". HE

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CLOSED WITH A WARNING THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WOULD

TOLERATE NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS INTERFERING WITH ITS "CREATIVE ACTION" OR "INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE" AND, IN EFFECT, WOULD SIMPLY NOT TOLERATE CRITICISM FROM THE FORCES OF "HIDDEN INTERESTS" AND "POLITICAL PILLAGE".

3. THIS WAS APPARENTLY TOO TEMPTING A CHALLENGE FOR THE FRENTE TO RESIST, AND THE STATEMENT BY SANCHEZ CONTAINED A NUMBER OF SIMILARLY CLOSE-TO-THE-BONE SLASHES -- NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS A REMINDER THAT THEN-ARMY COMMANDER RODRIGUEZ LARA HAD PLEDGED THE MILITARY'S UNCONDITIONAL LOYALTY TO PRESIDENT VELASCO SCARCELY SIX WEEKS BEFORE HIS OVERTHROW. THE HIGH POINT OF SANCHEZ'S STATEMENT WAS A DEMAND THAT POVEDA CLARIFY "WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS FREEDOM FOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS TO CARRY OUT THEIR ACTIVITIES". HE WILL PROBABLY HAVE THE NEXT MONTH OR TWO TO CONTEMPLATE POVEDA'S REPLY.

4. AS NOTED, PREVIOUSLY (REFTEL), RUNNING THROUGH "DIRECTORES DE TURNO" HAS BEEN THE CHIEF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND PRIME ATTENTION-GETTER OF THE FRENTE DURING ITS YEAR OF EXISTANCE. THESE RELATIVELY BRIEF CONFINEMENTS MAY SOME DAY SERVE THEIR BENEFICIARIES AS A BADGE OF HONOR IN FUTURE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS, BUT THEY DO NOT SEEM TO BE PAYING ANY NOTICEABLE PRESENT RETURNS.

5. ALSO OF INTEREST WAS A STATEMENT BY FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILO PONCE, WHO HAS IN RECENT YEARS USED THE CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST GROUP AS A VEHICLE FOR HIS OWN CONTINUING POLITICAL AMBITIONS. INTERVIEWED BY PHONE, HE MADE A BRIEF AND SUBDUED PRESS STATEMENT DEPLORING THE ARREST AS A VIOLATION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER AND ECUADOR'S OWN CONSTITUTION. IT WAS A CAREFUL AND UNDRAMATIC PERFORMANCE, BUT NOTABLE AS ONE OF THE FEW INSTANCES IN WHICH A FORMER POLITICAL LUMINARY HAS SPOKEN OUT IN OPPOSITION TO THE GOE'S ACTIONS.

6. THE FINAL WORD, HOWEVER, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SPOKEN BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF. QUERIED BY A VISITING MEXICAN JOURNALIST AS TO WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ELECTIONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN VIEW OF THE DE FACTO CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT GOE, RODRIGUEZ GAVE AN EMPHATIC NO. HE REMINDED THAT "WE HAVE A FIVE-YEAR PLAN TO FULFILL", NOTED THAT PREVIOUS SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS HAD BEEN "DISCARDED" BY THE GOE, AND DECLARED THAT THE TENURE OF THE REGIME "IS NOT PRESENTLY AN OPEN QUESTION". ASKED ABOUT THE ARREST OF SANCHEZ, RODRIGUEZ SAID SANCHEZ WAS BEING DETAINED UNTIL HE COULD PROVE THE STATEMENTS REGARDING

VELASCO (PARA 3) ASCRIBED TO HIMSELF.

7. MORAL: WHEN YOU DON'T CARRY A BIG STICK, SPEAK
SOFTLY -- OR, BETTER STILL, NOT AT ALL.
BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL STABILITY, DETENTION, POLICIES, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL PRISONERS, PARTY LEADERS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: powellba2
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974QUITO004620
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740187-0930
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740753/aaaabtle.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: QUITO 3438
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba2
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags: ANOMALY
Review Date: 12 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 SEP 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <19 FEB 2003 by martinml>; APPROVED <08 JUN 2005 by powellba2>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANOTHER DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION FRONT SPOKESMAN ARRESTED
TAGS: PINT, EC, (SANCHEZ ORELLANA, FRANCISCO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005